The Paper Chase

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Preview

- Writing a paper
  - And reading it...

- Writing a talk
  - And giving it...
Primary Rules

- “One ping only, please.”
  
  Captain Ramius
  
  *Hunt for Red October, 1990*
Secondary Rules

- Scientific writing
  - != literature
  - == journalism
- Don’t bury the lead (top-down structure)
  - Write in simple, direct sentences
  - “Just the facts, ma’am.”
    Sgt. Joe Friday, *Dragnet*
Say what *they* need to hear

- Motivate, explain, and discuss
  1. Tell them what you will tell them
  2. Tell them
  3. Tell them what you told them (briefly)

- “Cartoon” your diagrams

- Less is more
NOT what you want to say

- Don’t rehash your discovery process

- Skip tangents you find interesting

- If you have more than one thing to say:
  - WRITE MULTIPLE PAPERS
Caveat scriptor

The reader is always right

- Keep their interest
- Convince them
- Even if they’re not right:
  treat them as if they were

Or find a different set of readers (venue)
Reading a paper

- Skim
- Take multiple passes
- Listen for the “ping”
Writing a talk...

- Focus on WHAT, not HOW
  - An advertisement to read your paper
  - NOT a substitute for reading it

- Skip the animations
KISS

- 5 items per slide… why?

- AUDIENCE SHORT ATTENTION SPAN
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- Some of your audience is old
Giving a talk

- Do not read every…
  - Single, solitary, unique, and non-repeated word
  - On the slides you have presented for
  - Infocom 2006’s Student Workshop panel on writing

- Lasers are for DVD players
  - Optics labs, Bond villains, etc.

- Are you waiting for a call?
Finally...

“One ping only, please.”